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Tutunjian Announces Plan to Convert to Planning Board

For Immediate Release
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(May 19, 2004- TROY)- Mayor Harry Tutunjian announced Wednesday that he introduced legislation to the City Council Tuesday night that will convert the City of Troy Planning Commission to a Planning Board. The move is being made in an effort to streamline City government, offer more extensive service to developers, and save taxpayers money.

Tutunjian is investigating the possibility of having the new board meet twice a month, rather than the once a month meetings currently taking place. The twice a month meeting is an idea Tutunjian said he has thought about for years. It will give people and the City the opportunity to streamline projects.

“As we get ready to pass two major zoning changes in the next month and a half, we are going to see a boom in development by people who see Troy as the next big thing,” Tutunjian said. “Not only will that boom expand our tax base, as well as bring us new revenue, but it will begin to put Troy on the map for future development. We need to do what is best for the future of our City.”

“Filling a nine-member board with political, no show jobs is not the best way to move the City forward,” Tutunjian said. “I want to find people committed to Troy for the right reasons. This is the best course of action for that.”

Tutunjian remarked that the move from a commission to a board offers numerous positives. The number of members would decrease from nine to five, and the salary for each position would remain the same, allowing for an immediate savings of \$8,000. Tutunjian said the move is not being made for financial reasons, but do offer a small savings.

“By having less members on the board, there is a small savings in money,” Tutunjian said. “We’ve been saving a little bit here and a little bit there, and it will add up in the end.”

Tutunjian said he was dismayed when he first took office and started looking at the Planning Commission. Last year, not one member was able to attend every meeting. Three of the members could not attend 60 percent of the meetings. One commissioner attended three meetings, and another did not attend one. In all, seven of the 12 meetings held barely had the minimum for a quorum. One meeting had to be cancelled, and there was never a full slate on hand.

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“That type of conduct is ridiculous,” Tutunjian said. “We need to move business forward, with people who actually care about what happens here. We do not need meetings that are only half attended. With five committed members on the new board, we will be able to efficiently move projects along.”

The first term mayor acknowledged Wednesday that he understands some people would see the move as political following the decision by Judge George B. Ceresia last week, which reinstated appointments by former Mayor Mark Pattison to the commission.

“People will say what they are going to say,” Tutunjian said. “I’m sure some, as they have done in the past week, will resort to name calling. The fact of the matter is, we will save money, and improve our availability to businesses looking to move into Troy. It’s tough to argue against a growing tax base and a need to improve the services we provide to people.”

City Councilman Bob Armet, I- at-large, and City Councilman Mark Wojcik, R- District 1, members of the Law Committee, said Thursday they are in agreement with Tutunjian’s idea, and will support it.

“It’s clear that we are on the threshold of exciting and new opportunities here in Troy and it is important to have a working board that can, and will, move the agenda ahead for a better Troy,” Armet said.

“I support anything that will maximize productivity at a lesser cost to the City, and its residents,” Wojcik said. “We will get more out of a small group of people than we were out of a larger board that missed so many meetings.”

Tutunjian said he would consider resumes from any, and all, interested parties who want to take part on the Planning Board. Tutunjian is asking the City Council to introduce the Local Law at its June meeting with approve the measure on July 1st.